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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' ATTITUDES OF ACCEPTANCE AND THEIR OBSERVATIONS OF CHILDREN.

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DESCRIPTORS- *TEACHER ATTITUDES, *ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, *TEACHER EVALUATION, *STUDENT TEACHER RELATIONSHIP, *PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING, COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, MINNESOTA TEACHER ATTITUDE INVENTORY (MTAI)

RESULTS FROM TESTS OF TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN WERE COMPARED WITH TEACHER OBSERVATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN. THE MINNESOTA TEACHER ATTITUDE INVENTORY WAS ADMINISTERED TO 140 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AS A MEASURE OF THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF CHILDREN AND A MEASURE OF THE WARMTH DISPLAYED IN THEIR ATTITUDES. TEACHERS WITH HIGH OR LOW SCORES WERE SELECTED FOR CRITERION GROUPS AND THEIR ATTITUDE SCORES WERE COMPARED WITH RECORDED OBSERVATIONS OF CHILDREN BY THESE TEACHERS. THE SEX OF THE CHILDREN UNDER OBSERVATION WAS COMPARED WITH THE SEX OF TEACHERS BY MEANS OF CHI-SQUARE TO TEST THE HYPOTHESIS THAT MORE CHILDREN OF THE OPPOSITE SEX FROM THE TEACHER WILL BE SELECTED FOR OBSERVATION THAN WILL CHILDREN OF THE SAME SEX AS THE TEACHER. THE OBSERVATIONS WERE THEN EVALUATED IN TERMS OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR REPORTED AS WELL AS VARIETY OF BEHAVIOR REPORTED. THE HIGH-ACCEPTANCE TEACHERS WERE COMPARED WITH THE LOW-ACCEPTANCE TEACHERS IN TERMS OF THE MEAN NUMBER OF REPORTS FOR CATEGORIES OF CHILD BEHAVIOR. THESE COMPARISONS TESTED HYPOTHESES RELATING HIGH-ACCEPTANCE TEACHERS WITH POSITIVE BEHAVIOR OBSERVATIONS AND A WIDE VARIETY OF BEHAVIOR OBSERVATIONS. NONE OF THE HYPOTHESES WERE SUPPORTED BY THE FINDINGS. (JM)

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The Relationship Between Teachers' Attitudes of Acceptance and Their Observations of Children

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The Problem

Teachers' attitudes of acceptance and warmth or of non-acceptance and lack of warmth have great bearing on the children in their classes in terms of learning as well as personality development. Anderson (1945) has shown that individual children may live in vastly different psychological environments while in the same classroom. Each child's treatment in the classroom is partly due to factors beyond his control, specifically his teacher's attitudes and personality. Even the young child is soon aware of these changes in climate from one classroom to another.

Since so great a part of his education and development is dependent upon his teacher's perceptions and feelings, it would seem worthwhile to consider the classroom in terms of the teacher. This study is concerned with teacher attitudes as they affect observations of children. Observations, in turn, are part of the larger context of punishment, assignment of grades, and even referral to guidance personnel.

The theoretical position as argued by Snygg and Combs (1959) is essentially that people who are more accepting tend to have a broader perceptual field. Since the phenomenal self is the point of orientation for the individual's every behavior, it is this self which provides meaning to what would otherwise be meaningless. Therefore, how a teacher behaves in the classroom depends not only on how he sees his students and the situation but also upon how he sees himself. Well-adjusted teachers with a high degree of self acceptance produce well-adjusted students while poorly-adjusted teachers have negative effects on their students. The belief that behavior is consistent with the concept of self and that self acceptance leads to acceptance of others is further stated by Rogers (1959) and Maslow (1954).

Related Literature

Anderson (1945) studied teachers' behavior in relation to different students and found that kindergarten teachers dominated boys more frequently than girls and tended to meet aggression with still more aggression. Withall (1956) noted gross variations in the amount of attention bestowed on each learner by the teacher, while Meyer (1956) found that boys, who are perceived as more aggressive and nonconforming than girls, received more disapproval contacts from teachers and that both boys and girls were aware of differences in teachers' attitudes. When the "Guess Who" technique was employed, more boys were nominated for disapproval items than girls.

In another study (Brown, 1960), pupils who were underachievers and overachievers and who had teachers who established a more pupil-centered classroom climate made higher scores in arithmetic reasoning than did underachievers and overachievers who were exposed to a more teacher-centered classroom climate. Little relationship was found between average achievers and classroom climate. According to Washburne (1960), teacher personality has a clear effect on the progress of pupils. Different kinds of teachers get varying amounts of achievement from different kinds of children. Self-controlling teachers who are characterized by warmth and sensitivity got the most achievement from several kinds of children, while fearful teachers who were anxious and cautious received the least achievement from their students. Withall and Lewis (1963) state that it is plausible that the teacher helps determine which pupil become over- and under-chosen by their peers. Gage (1963) summarizes current studies by stating that there is "clear evidence that the teacher's personality has a marked and measurable effect on the progress of her pupils academically and socially."

Several studies have used the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory as a device for measuring attitudes. Callis (1953) found the test correlated .49 with students' ratings of the relations in the classroom and .50 with the combined ratings of students and observers. Callis concluded that the MTAI can predict interpersonal relations in the classroom about as well as academic performance can be predicted by the use of IQ tests. Children's ratings on "How I Like School" correlate .38 with their teacher's MTAI scores taken as college juniors (Hoyt, 1959).

Budd (1959) noted that high scores on the MTAI are associated with a tendency to prefer extreme response positions (Strongly Agree or Strongly Disagree) to moderate positions (Agree or Disagree). In another study (Sheldon, 1959), teachers scoring high on the MTAI were found to differ significantly from low-scorers in intelligence, authoritarianism, affiliation, aggression, dominance, and succorance. Knowledge of the principles of educational psychology, child development, and child behavior are significantly related to teacher attitudes as measured by the MTAI although there is not significant relationship between the MTAI and traits measured by the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey (La Bue, 1959). The author concludes that personalities must be assessed by other means.

It would seem from the above studies that the MTAI is a useful device in measuring teachers' attitudes of warmth and acceptance toward children. That these attitudes have an effect on children's performance has been indicated also. The rationale for this proposed study might well be based on Jersild's suggestions that a teacher must understand himself in order to understand others, must comprehend his own anxiety in order to understand that of the child, and must recognize the purpose of education as being to help children and adults know themselves and develop healthy attitudes of self-acceptance (Jersild, 1955).

Objective

Relate teachers' attitudes of child acceptance to their observations of children. Hypotheses to be tested:

1) More-accepting teachers will observe more instances of positive behavior than will less-accepting teachers.

2) More-accepting teachers will observe fewer instances of negative behavior than will less-accepting teachers.

3) More-accepting teachers will note a wider variety of behavior and observe more varying patterns of behavior than will less-accepting teachers.

4) More children of the opposite sex from the teacher will be selected for observation than will children of the same sex as the teacher.

5) The tendency to select children of opposite sex from the teacher will be more apparent among teachers scoring low in acceptance than those scoring high.

Procedures

General Design

This study is an attempt to compare teachers measuring high in acceptance with those measuring low in acceptance in terms of their recorded observations of children. Observations were evaluated for instances of positive and negative behavior as well as variety of behavior patterns noted.

Population and Sample

The subjects were drawn from the population of elementary-school teachers in the California Central Valley area, enrolled over a period of two years in a graduate seminar centered around observations of children. These teachers were given the MTAI at the beginning of the course. The top 27 per cent of scores and bottom 27 per cent of scores formed the more-accepting and less-accepting groups. The high-acceptance group numbered 31 while 33 teachers made up the low-acceptance group.

Data and Instrumentation

The basic data for this study were the recorded observations that each teacher enrolled in the seminar was asked to submit at the end of the course. These observations have been retained over a period of years, thereby enabling the sample to be larger than the current enrollment in the seminar. Of each total record of 100-150 anecdotes selected for the study, thirty observations randomly distributed over the school year were used for evaluation.

The MTAI was used to determine the individual degree of warmth and acceptance each teacher demonstrates. The test consists of 150 statements pertaining to children, education, and teaching. Each teacher was asked to indicate one of five responses to each statement: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree. Scoring is such that a higher score indicates more attitudes of acceptance toward children than does a lower score. The Spearman-Brown procedure for computing reliability results in reliability measures of .88 and .93 for the MTAI, dependent upon differing methods of scoring.

For each subject used in the study, then, an MTAI score was available as well as a total record of observations. The thirty observations of each record selected for investigation were considered by two independent judges to determine 1) the number of positive behavior examples reported, 2) the number of negative behavior examples reported, and 3) the number of total varying behavior examples reported.

Analysis

Two independent judges read the selected observations and reliability estimates were made by computing Pearson product-moment coefficients. Table 1 indicates that reliability coefficients ranged from .48 to .85. The independent ratings were then averaged to obtain one score for each category.

Hypothesis 1: More accepting teachers will observe more instances of positive behavior than will less-accepting teachers.

Test: A mean score of instances of positive behavior was computed for the more-accepting teachers as well as for the less-accepting teachers. The difference between means was tested for significance by use of a t-score involving a one-sided critical region. The computed t-score did not fall beyond the region of acceptance, and this hypothesis was not supported. (See Table 2)

Hypothesis 2: More-accepting teachers will observe fewer instances of negative behavior than will less-accepting teachers.

Test: A mean score of instances of negative behavior was computed for the more-accepting teachers as well as for the less-accepting teachers. The difference between means was tested for significance by use of a t-score involving a one-sided critical region. The computed t-score did not fall beyond the region of acceptance, and this hypothesis was not supported. (See Table 2)

Hypothesis 3: More-accepting teachers will note a wider variety of behavior and observe more varying patterns of behavior than will less-accepting teachers.

Test: A mean score of total observed patterns of behavior was computed for the more-accepting teachers as well as for the less-accepting teachers. The difference between means was tested for significance by use of a t-score involving a one-sided critical region. The computed t-score did not fall beyond the region of acceptance, and this hypothesis was not supported. (See Table 2)

Hypothesis 4: More children of the opposite sex from the teacher will be selected for observation than will children of the same sex as the teacher.

Test: The chi-square techniques was used as a test of independence in a contingency table. The observed value of chi-square was not larger than the expected value, and this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 5: The tendency to select children of opposite sex from the teacher will be more apparent among teachers scoring low in acceptance than among those scoring high.

Test: The chi-square technique was used as a test of independence in a contingency table involving high- and low-scoring teachers and children of the same and of the opposite sex as the teacher. The observed value of chi-square was not larger than the expected value, and this hypothesis was not supported.

Discussion

The lack of support for the hypotheses proposed in this study may be due to the two inherently different situations each subject faced, namely taking the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Survey and compiling a record ofobservations. Results on the MTAI indicated the presence of a high-acceptance group and a low-acceptance group. However, no differences were found between these groups in terms of their observations of children. This may represent a general feeling that teachers find it easier to be accepting and tolerant of children in general, but not of one child whom they face day after day.

Clearly, the perceptual fields differed here. Teachers taking a test may have been somewhat subject to the "halo" effect. They know what responses are considered more-accepting and were able to answer accordingly. They may have felt that the MTAI was a direct rating of themselves and therefore put forth a pleasing profile. When recording children's behavior, however, teachers may not have perceived that their attitudes were reflected in their notes. In other words, it may be easier to know how one should respond than to actually do so. Knowledge of attitudes toward children is not the same as action involving one "real" child.

Mention should also be made of the difficulty in rating observations as negative or positive. Both clinical judges were aware that they sometimes "read between the lines" or rated behavior in terms of their own frameworks rather than the teacher's. It was difficult at times to decide between the literal description and the feeling tone of the notebook. Thus, the mere note "John laughed today" might be either negative or positive depending on the context.

Summary

Approximately 140 elementary-school teachers enrolled, over a period of 2 years, in a graduate seminar centered around observations of children were given the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory in order to determine those scoring low in acceptance and warmth and those scoring high in these characteristics. The top 27 per cent and the bottom 27 per cent of scores were then selected as the criterion groups for comparison with these teachers' recorded observations of children.

The sex of the children under observation was compared with the sex of teachers by means of chi-square to test the hypothesis that more children of the opposite sex from the teacher will be selected for observation than will children of the same sex as the teacher. This hypothesis was not supported. The observations were then evaluated in terms of positive and negative behavior reported as well as variety of behavior reported. For purposes of comparison, thirty anecdotes, randomly distributed over the entire school year, were examined for each teacher. Mean number of reports of positively valued behavior, negatively valued behavior, and the total number of different kinds of behavior noted were determined. The high-acceptance teachers were compared with the low-acceptance teachers in terms of the above mean number of reports to test the following hypotheses: 1 more-accepting teachers will observe more instances of positive behavior than will less-accepting teachers, 2 more-accepting teachers will observe fewer instances of negative behavior than will less-accepting teachers, and 3 more-accepting teachers will note a wider variety of behavior and observe more varying patterns of behavior than will less-accepting teachers. None of these three hypotheses were supported by the data.

Table 1

Inter-Judge Reliability Coefficients

	Instances of Positive Behavior	Instances of Negative Behavior	Total Number of Behavior Patterns
High-acceptance teachers	.82	.70	.48
Low-acceptance teachers	.85	.76	.62

Table 2

Mean Scores and Significance

	Mean Score for High-Acceptance Group	Mean Score for Low-Acceptance Group	Significance
Instances of Positive Behavior	33.5	31.5	$.25 < P < .30$ not significant
Instances of Negative Behavior	39.1	37.0	$.25 < P < .30$ not significant
Total Number of Behavior Patterns	45.3	43.4	$.25 < P < .30$ not significant

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